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UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 002051

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STATE FOR WHA/CEN, WHA/PPC, WHA/USOAS, AND DRL/PHD  
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAM AND DCHA/DG

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: HONDURAN ELECTIONS NEWS: UPDATE 6

REF: (A) Tegucigalpa 1984

- (B) Tegucigalpa 1968
- (C) Tegucigalpa 1949
- (D) Tegucigalpa 1680
- (E) Tegucigalpa 1665

Lobo Ally's Congressional Candidacy Now Official

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1. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) officially approved the inscription of the Congressional candidacy in the Department of Lempira for Juan Orlando Hernandez, a National Party congressman. The TSE made its decision official September 29, but the likely decision was clear for some time. The vote on the verdict was two to one; Aristides Mejia, President of the TSE and a Liberal Party member, voted against the inscription. He argued that he believes the Constitution should have prevailed, and not international human rights agreements.

2. Disqualification in this case was sought due to Juan Orlando Hernandez' familial relationship to Supreme Court Justice Maria Elena Matute. Juan Orlando Hernandez is the current Secretary of Congress (Majority Whip) and is a close confidant of President of Congress and National Party presidential candidate Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo. The Supreme Court had previously thrown out a number of challenges to Hernandez's candidacy. Now the Honduran Bar Association is threatening to oppose the registration of Juan Orlando Hernandez.

Investigators Find Call Centers Damaged Zelaya's Image

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3. The Public Ministry's office of Common Crimes has confirmed that political call centers (Consultores y Proveedores de Servicios para el Desarrollo - COPRODE) affiliated with the National Party were used to damage the image of the Liberal Party presidential candidate Manuel "Mel" Zelaya. On August 4, public investigators were assigned to investigate a case of possible electoral crime. They investigated the offices of COPRODE, located in the building that houses the National Register of Persons (RNP).

4. Investigators determined that calls were made with questions designed to denigrate the image Zelaya to influence the receiver to vote for his rival candidate, Pepe Lobo. The COPRODE call center was run by Marco Antonio Bonilla, nephew of Pompello Bonilla, former campaign manager for Lobo. According to the Public Ministry, Article 72, number 5 of the Electoral Law (prohibiting actions on the part of the parties which denigrate other parties or their candidates) was violated. Prosecutors are looking for other possible actions which would tie COPRODE to the National Party and could constitute additional charges.

5. The Liberal Party candidate, Mel Zelaya, has demanded that that criminal charges be brought against the National Party. In addition he says he will ask the magistrates of the TSE to condemn the call center's actions.

National Party asks TSE to Investigate Liberal Party Funds

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6. The National Party has requested the TSE to investigate Liberal Party funds so that their sources are identified. National Party authorities also asked the TSE to have the Liberal Party campaign director, Dr. Hugo Noe Pino removed from his position. National Party authorities claimed that Noe Pino, as president of the Honduran Central Bank, was responsible the banking collapse during Carlos Flores Facusse's administration from 1994 to 1998, due to his dismantling of the Banking Superintendency. Press reports allege this action is President Ricardo Maduro's response to the petition of the four other parties to remove his Ministers of Public Security and Defense from the Political Commission of the National Party.

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